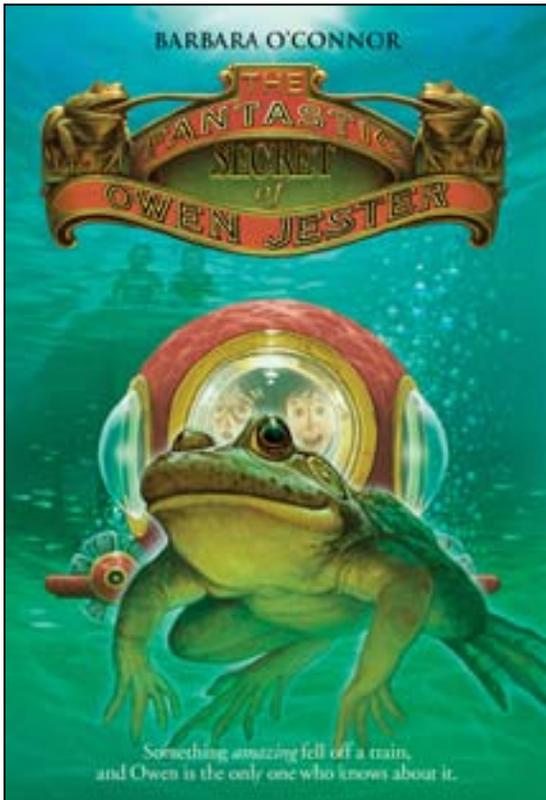


## A Teacher's Guide for *The Fantastic Secret of Owen Jester* by Barbara O'Connor



Grades 3 to 7  
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### ABOUT THE BOOK

Owen Jester wishes his family hadn't moved to his grandfather's house in Carter, Georgia, after his dad lost his job at the hardware store. For one thing, his grandfather's live-in nurse, Earlene, sure knows how to ruin anyone's idea of a good time. And then there's Viola, the bossy, know-it-all girl next door, who can't ever keep her nose in her own business. She even thinks Owen should put his freshly captured bullfrog, Tooley, back into Graham Pond. Who would go to all the trouble of catching the biggest, greenest, slimiest, most beautiful bullfrog in the whole world just to let it go? Owen vows to stay as far away from Viola as possible. Then late one night, he hears unusual noises coming from the train track in the woods below his grandfather's house. Something mysterious and wonderful has fallen off the train. But when Owen finally discovers what it is, he realizes he just might need a know-it-all after all . . . Can Viola keep the most fantastic secret to ever tumble into Carter, Georgia?



### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Barbara O'Connor** is the author of fourteen novels and biographies for children. Drawing on her South Carolina roots, Barbara's novels have a distinctly Southern voice. Her books have received many awards, including the Massachusetts Book Award and Parents' Choice Award, and have been nominated for young readers' awards in thirty-eight states.



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## PREDICTION

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Have you ever kept a really great secret? How hard is it to keep a secret when you're excited about something? Who would you trust to keep your secret? Who would you definitely not want to share it with?

### CHAPTER 1

#### **Vocabulary**

hunkered, miserable, colander, tumbleweed

#### **Comprehension**

Describe Owen Jester's life in Carter, Georgia.

#### **Prediction**

What did Owen hear?

### CHAPTER 2

#### **Vocabulary**

pudgy, hedge

#### **Comprehension**

Explain who Tooley is and why Owen is worried about him.

#### **Prediction**

Will things get better or worse with Viola?

### CHAPTER 3

#### **Vocabulary**

trampling, examine, muttered, unusual, lurking

#### **Comprehension**

Describe how Owen's life has recently changed. Why is it harder for him now than it used to be? What's the worst part?

#### **Prediction**

Will Owen find what fell off the train?

### CHAPTER 4

#### **Vocabulary**

rickety, gauge, clenched, luau, tiki, canteen, enormous

#### **Comprehension**

Why does Owen say the word "rocket" suddenly? Why does he want to do this?

#### **Prediction**

Will Travis and Stumpy help Owen look? How do you know?

### CHAPTER 5

#### **Vocabulary**

tromped, gloomy, clatter

#### **Comprehension**

What things did they find? What did they not?

#### **Prediction**

Will Tooley be fine or will he get sicker?

### CHAPTER 6

#### **Vocabulary**

yammered, trudged, baling wire, huddled

#### **Comprehension**

Explain why Tooley needs a new cage.

#### **Prediction**

Will Viola tell on them for being mean? Why or why not?

### CHAPTER 7

#### **Vocabulary**

admired, liable, mangy

#### **Comprehension**

List the steps Owen and the boys took to make Tooley happy.

#### **Prediction**

Argue for or against the idea that Owen and Viola could ever be friends.

### CHAPTER 8

#### **Vocabulary**

deserving, lunged, evade, persistent, infested

#### **Comprehension**

Explain who Earlene is and why she makes Owen's life more difficult.

#### **Prediction**

Will the cage make Tooley happy and healthy? Why or why not?

### CHAPTER 9

#### **Vocabulary**

nudged, nigger, tangle, gape

#### **Comprehension**

Why do Travis and Stumpy quit looking? How is Owen rewarded for his persistence?

#### **Prediction**

What do you think it is?

### CHAPTER 10

#### **Vocabulary**

scraggly, scattered, ravine, leeches, solemnly

#### **Comprehension**

What did Owen find? What clues best help lead him to it?

#### **Prediction**

What will they do with it?

### CHAPTER 11

#### **Vocabulary**

flourish, gnarly, appetite, signaling

#### **Comprehension**

What is keeping Owen from showing his friends the sub?

#### **Prediction**

How long will Owen have a secret? Why? Why is it so hard to keep a secret?

### CHAPTER 12

#### **Vocabulary**

chattered, instrument, gesturing

#### **Comprehension**

Would you be as excited as the boys to find it? What would you want to do? Who would you tell?

#### **Prediction**

What will Viola do? What will she say?

### **CHAPTER 13**

#### **Vocabulary**

indignant, glumly

#### **Comprehension**

Why does Owen have a niggles about Tooley? Have you ever felt a niggles about something? What did you decide?

#### **Prediction**

What will Owen do about the sub? The frog?

### **CHAPTER 14**

#### **Vocabulary**

disbelief, fiddle, hayloft

#### **Comprehension**

What's the plan?

#### **Prediction**

Will their plan be ruined? How?

### **CHAPTER 15**

#### **Vocabulary**

submersible, gestured, aggravation, ambient

#### **Comprehension**

Does Viola know everything or not? Should she brag about it?

#### **Prediction**

Will Viola tell? How will they keep her quiet?

### **CHAPTER 16**

#### **Vocabulary**

convincing, scanning, scampered

#### **Comprehension**

Explain how the boys will get the sub to the pond. Will it work?

#### **Prediction**

What will Owen decide to do with Tooley? What makes you think this?

### **CHAPTER 17**

#### **Vocabulary**

stormed, smug, gamble, relieved

#### **Comprehension**

Why did Owen ask Viola if she wanted to be involved?

#### **Prediction**

Will adults find out before they can get it into the pond? Why or why not?

### **CHAPTER 18**

#### **Vocabulary**

linen

#### **Comprehension**

Who does Owen tell everything to at the end of the day? Who do you?

#### **Prediction**

What steps do they need to take for both the plan and the sub to work?

### **CHAPTER 19**

#### **Vocabulary**

hacking

#### **Comprehension**

Why was Owen "sick of talking about getting the sub into the pond"?

#### **Prediction**

If Owen frees Tooley, how will Travis and Stumpy react?

### **CHAPTER 20**

#### **Vocabulary**

annoyed, surface, peeping

#### **Comprehension**

Why do you think Owen finally decided to do what he did with Tooley? Do you agree with his decision? Why or why not?

#### **Prediction**

What will happen next? What makes you think this?

### **CHAPTER 21**

#### **Vocabulary**

glared, glimpse, chomping, accusing

#### **Comprehension**

How did Travis and Stumpy take the news about Tooley?

#### **Prediction**

What is Viola's plan? Why does she know so much?

### **CHAPTER 22**

#### **Vocabulary**

irritated, warped

#### **Comprehension**

Make a list of Owen's problems and put a star next to the one you think is most difficult.

#### **Prediction**

Will he figure out how to operate it? What clues do you have?

### **CHAPTER 23**

#### **Vocabulary**

buoyancy, dramatic, rhythmic

#### **Comprehension**

Explain why Owen needs Travis and Stumpy to help move the sub. How does he convince them to return?

#### **Prediction**

If they get the sub to the pond, who do you think should get to drive it first? Why?

### **CHAPTER 24**

#### **Vocabulary**

breaker, valves, struggled, patient, perched, scrambling

#### **Comprehension**

List the steps it took to move the sub to the pond.

#### **Prediction**

Will they be caught before they can try it? What makes you think this?

## **CHAPTER 25**

### **Vocabulary**

remove, adjusted, ballast

### **Comprehension**

Did Earlene spoil their plans? Why do you think she's so crabby?

### **Prediction**

Will they be successful? Is this a safe idea? Would you do it?

## **CHAPTER 26**

### **Vocabulary**

instantly, beaming, trembled

### **Comprehension**

Who got first dibs inside the sub? Why? Did you think it was fair or not?

### **Prediction**

What will they see? What might happen?

## **CHAPTER 27**

### **Vocabulary**

millisecond, manual, darting, magnificent

### **Comprehension**

What did they see below and above the pond?

### **Prediction**

Will they be punished? Will their parents be impressed? What would your parents do?

## **CHAPTER 28**

### **Vocabulary**

furious, splintered, dismantled

### **Comprehension**

Who called Owen? Why?

### **Prediction**

Will Viola and Owen be friends now?

## **CHAPTER 29**

### **Vocabulary**

arriving, telegraph, jabbed

### **Comprehension**

What did Owen read to his grandpa? Do you think his mom will keep a copy even though Owen got in trouble for participating?

### **Prediction**

Do you think this will be a story Owen tells his own kids one day? How might the story change as he gets older?

## **CHAPTER 30**

### **Vocabulary**

punishment, bulging

### **Comprehension**

In the end, what and who have changed in Carter, Georgia?

### **Prediction**

What adventure might Owen and his friends have next?

## **PROJECTS**

### **READING COMPREHENSION**

Good readers make connections to what they are reading. This means they think about how the story relates to something from their own life or someone they know. It could also remind the reader of another book, movie, or television show in some way. Making these connections helps readers stay tuned in to the story instead of letting their mind drift away. As you read the book, make at least two connections in each chapter. Write them on a sticky note and leave them on the pages where you connected. Then share the memories, connections, and ideas with a reading buddy.

### **WRITING**

In Chapter One, Owen writes about three good things and three bad things about moving in with his grandpa. Write your own list of three good things, three bad things about something in your own life. Examples: playing soccer, being in the sixth grade, or learning to play an instrument.

### **HISTORY**

It was the ancient Egyptians who finally inspired the answer of how to move the sub. Learn more about the Egyptians and how they influenced the future with all the techniques they used to build the pyramids. Draw a picture and explain what you learned.

### **ART**

Create some type of three-dimensional art inspired by the story. It can be any shape (realistic in form or from your imagination) and color. For full credit you need to write a paragraph about your art piece and why you made the choices that you did.

### **SCIENCE**

Graham Pond is an example of a freshwater biome. Research the food chain in an ecosystem as small as a pond and then draw a food web that shows how each organism helps the other to survive.

Research exactly what it is that Tooley needed to survive. Would he have continued to survive if kept in captivity?